

Appl. No. 09/558,945
Amdt. dated November 6, 2003
Reply to Office Action of August 6, 2003

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Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1, 5-12, 16-17, 19-26 and 36-45 have been amended. Claim 18 has been canceled without prejudice. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

- 101
1. (Currently Amended) A method of extending promotional discounts on items for sale to consumers, comprising:
- identifying a consumer by a unique identifier;
- promoting a first selected item with a discount or special price to ~~an~~ said identified consumer; wherein the discount or special price is granted upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer within a predetermined time period;
- ~~withdrawing said discount or special price to said identified consumer;~~
- ~~granting said discount upon purchase of said item by said identified consumer prior to said withdrawing step; and~~
- B1 determining if said identified consumer has acknowledged said promoting within the predetermined time period; and
- ~~holding said withdrawing step in abeyance upon an acknowledgment of said promoting step by said identified consumer~~
- prolonging the promoting beyond the predetermined time period upon determining that said consumer has acknowledged said promoting within the predetermined time period.
- 101
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special price comprises a free sample.
- 101
3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special price comprises a reduction in price for a plurality of items.

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101 4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special prices comprises points that can be accumulated and redeemed for related or unrelated items or cash in the future.

101 5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises sending direct mail to said identified consumer and wherein said ~~granting step~~ is effective predetermined time period commences when said direct mail is to reach said identified consumer.

31 6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a network accessible from a kiosk at a location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises passing a store loyalty card through a reader at said kiosk.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6 wherein in response to passing said card loyalty card through said reader, said kiosk generates a printed list of discounts or special prices ~~inverted promotions~~ to said identified consumer.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a network accessible at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises scanning said first selected item at said location by a scanning device, wherein said scanning device displays said ~~inverted promotion~~ discount or special price of said first selected item.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a

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network accessible at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises walking past an audio device at said location with a store loyalty card, wherein said audio device voices said ~~inverted promotion~~ discount or special price of said first selected item.

101 11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification.

101 12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a store loyalty card.

101 2 13. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special price comprises a free sample.

101 3 14. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special price comprises a reduction in price for a plurality of items.

101 4 15. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special prices comprises points that can be accumulated and redeemed for related or unrelated items or cash in the future. Price

101 5 16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises sending direct mail to said identified consumer and wherein said ~~granting step is effective predetermined time period commences~~ when said direct mail is to reach said identified consumer.

6 17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible from a kiosk at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

18. (Canceled) /

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19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a network accessible at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises scanning said first selected item at said location by a scanning device, wherein said scanning device displays said ~~inverted promotion~~ discount or special price of said first selected item. OK 11 2(2)

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a network accessible at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises walking past an audio device at said location with a store loyalty card, wherein said audio device voices said ~~inverted promotion~~ discount or special price of said first selected item. 11 2(2)

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising promoting a second selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer, wherein the discount or special price for the second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said identified consumer. b1 101

22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein said promoting promotion step of said second selected item is performed upon said acknowledgment of said promoting step of said first selected item by said identified consumer. 101

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification and wherein acceptance of the discount or special price of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using requires full direct identification of said consumer. 101

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification and wherein 101

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acceptance the discount or special price of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using requires only limited direct identification of said consumer.

10/ 25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a full direct identification and wherein the discount or special price acceptance of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using requires full direct identification of said consumer.

b1 10/ 26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a full direct identification and wherein the discount or special price acceptance of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using requires only limited direct identification of said consumer.
e.g. phone #

10/ 27. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer is by credit or debit card.

28. (Withdrawn) In a store computer network system for one or more stores selling a plurality of items, said system providing prices for said plurality of items to consumers in general and special prices for a first set of selected items to a first set of selected consumers, said system having a first table of prices for said plurality items and a second table of special prices for said first set of selected items for said first set of selected consumers, said system providing a special price for one of said selected items to a selected consumer and otherwise providing a price for an item from said first table if said item has no entry in said second table, a method of providing special prices for a second set of selected items for a second set of selected consumers, comprising

providing a third table of special prices for a second set of selected items to said second set of selected consumers; and

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providing entries in said second table for items not in said first set of selected items, said entries set to zero so that a price from said first table is not provided to one of said second set of selected consumers for an item in said second set of selected items.

29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 28 wherein said special prices in said third table are set to individual members of said second set of selected consumers.

30. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 29 wherein said first set of selected consumers are identified by a store loyalty card.

31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 30 wherein said first set of selected consumers comprise said second set of selected consumers.

32. (Withdrawn) In a store computer network system for one or more stores selling a plurality of items, said system providing prices for said plurality of items to consumers in general and special prices for a first set of selected items to a first set of selected consumers, a computer server for said network system comprising

a first table of prices for said plurality items;

a second table of special prices for said first set of selected items for said first set of selected consumers, said server providing a special price for one of said selected items to a selected consumer and otherwise providing a price for an item from said first table if said item has no entry in said second table; and

a third table of special prices for a second set of selected items to a second set of selected consumers, said second table having entries for items not in said first set of selected items, said entries set to zero so that a price from said first table is not provided to one of said second set of selected consumers for an item in said second set of selected items;

whereby special prices for said second set of selected items for said second set of selected consumers is provided.

33. (Withdrawn) The computer server of claim 32 wherein said special prices in said third table are set to individual members of said second set of selected consumers.

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34. (Withdrawn) The computer server of claim 32 wherein said computer server identifies said first set of selected consumers by a store loyalty card.

35. (Withdrawn) The computer server of claim 34 wherein said first set of selected consumers comprise said second set of consumers.

36. (Currently Amended) A method of extending promotional discounts on items for sale to consumers, comprising:

identifying a consumer by a unique identifier;

promoting a first selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer;

withdrawing said discount or special price to said identified consumer;

granting said discount upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer prior to said withdrawing; and

holding said withdrawing in abeyance upon an acknowledgment of said promoting by said identified consumer;

The method of claim 1 wherein said identifying, promoting, withdrawing, granting and holding steps are performed by a computer network system, and wherein said identified consumer is unable to obtain said discount or special price upon said first selected item prior to said withholding step due to a malfunction of said computer network system, said method further comprising:

recording a price paid for said first selected item by said consumer at a location;
and

granting a rebate of the difference between said recorded price and said discount or special price at the next purchase of said first selected item by said consumer at said location.

37. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said first selected item is associated with a plurality of discounts or special prices including said discount or special price that is granted upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer, further

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~~comprising providing a list of maximum possible discounts for each selected item to any identified consumer.~~

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein said plurality of said discounts or special prices list is used to ensure said identified consumer does not receive a discount or special price that said identified consumer is not entitled to receive ~~enforce boundaries on correct behavior of an inverted promotion system as described in claim 1.~~

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein said plurality of discounts or special prices list is used to facilitate customer service by issuing the best possible promotion given to any customer on a specific item when the system implementing claim 1 the ~~inverted promotions~~ is not functioning.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising organizing said promoting said inverted promotions according to a logical layout pattern.

41. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising withholding said promoting future inverted promotions from consumers who have not received or acted upon notifications of past ~~inverted promotions~~.

42. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising promoting said first selected item with said discount or special price to a plurality of consumers ~~grouping a set recipients of inverted promotions to receive the same inverted promotions.~~

43. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 42 further comprising selectively informing promoting said first selected item with said discount or special price to said plurality of consumers ~~different recipients of a common set of inverted promotions of specific promotions based on limited direct identification.~~

44. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 whereby said promoting further ~~comprising~~ comprises accompanying said discount or special price with additional factual information other than discounts or prices.

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61 45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 whereby said promoting step is accomplished by selecting one or more notification mechanisms based on the cost of said notification mechanisms and the customer's history of interacting with different notification mechanisms.
